



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1200.0 - Standards for Social, Labour and Demographic Variables, 1999

Latest ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 04/07/2006

Summary

Main Features

Introduction

Statistical Standards for Social, Labour and Demographic Variables have been developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to provide a means of standardising the way the ABS and other agencies collect and disseminate information relating to social and labour issues in Australia. The statistical variables to which these standards relate include the labour force, demographic, family, household, income, education, cultural diversity and language variables. Other statistical variables may be included in the future.

The links below will take you to the standards

Links to the standards for Population Statistics

[Labour Force Variables](#) (cat.no. 1288.0)
[Demographic Variables](#) (cat.no. 1285.0)
[Education Variables](#) (cat.no. 1272.0)
[Cultural Diversity Variables](#) (cat.no. 1289.0)
[Language Variables](#) (cat.no. 1264.0)
[Family, Household and Income Variables](#) (cat.no. 1286.0)
[Disability Variables](#) (cat.no. 1200.0.55.001)

Definition of a statistical standard

Many different standards are used in statistics, such as computing, editing, publication, form design, and data quality standards. The specific statistical standards included here and doclinked below facilitate the collection, aggregation and output of social and labour data. A statistical standard in this context can be defined as a set of components which, when used together, produce consistent and high quality statistical output (about the concepts which underpin the statistical variables) across collections and over time. Statistical standards are the approved rules applied by the ABS in the development, collection, processing and dissemination of official statistics.

A statistical standard includes many components which specify standard practice at any point in the cycle of data collection, processing and dissemination. The essential set of components that comprise and specify a statistical standard for a variable are as follows:

- Standard name of the variable;
- Standard definition of the variable;
- Standard question(s);
- Standard classification;
- Standard coding procedures; and
- Standard output categories.

Advantages of using statistical standards

Statistical standards are designed to add quality to the data produced by improving accuracy, reliability, relevance and timeliness. ABS standards are finalised following thorough and rigorous development of concepts, definitions, questions, classifications, and processing and dissemination procedures. This rigorous development process is combined with consideration of practical issues such as statistical feasibility and extensive consultation with users of the standard and of the resulting data. This thorough development work leads to long term cost savings by providing an 'off the shelf solution' for most data collections.

Standards improve data comparability and comprehensibility. Because ABS standards are designed to harmonise, as far as is possible, with established Australian and international practices, this comparability may apply internationally, across collections, across time, across agencies, and within a given subject area. Comprehensibility means the ability to be understood, by users of the standard and by respondents to administrative and statistical collections. It involves clarity of definitions, realism in the sense of modelling the real world, and providing a logical and coherent structure for collecting information.

The widespread use of standards will also provide an integrated statistical picture of Australian society. They facilitate the process of drawing together all the data about a particular topic, variable or population, from the full range of statistical sources, in a meaningful and useful way.

Maintenance of statistical standards

Users of the statistical standards should be aware that the standards are subject to an ongoing testing and maintenance program and may change as a result. In particular, the questions are reviewed regularly and the question response categories are updated on the basis of the latest available data. For instance, the Country of Birth of Person response categories may be updated following the Census if necessary.

The ABS will provide advice on the use and appropriate implementation of the standard variables. Variations from the standards are not encouraged and should only be formulated and used in consultation with the ABS.